

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 HEW-04 OES-09 SP-02 CIAE-00

DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-01 ICA-11 /053 W

-----033692 231433Z /41

R 230822Z JUL 78

FM AMEMBASSY KABUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9195

C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 5939

DEPT. PASS AID FOR NE

E.O 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAID, AF, US

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH MINISTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH, DR.

SHAH WALI

1. SUMMARY: IN MY INITIAL CALL ON THE MINISTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH, DR. SHAH WALI, WE DISCUSSED THE FIVE YEAR PLAN CURRENTLY UNDER PREPARATION, HIS MINISTRY'S ROLE IN FAMILY PLANNING, AND THE STATUS OF AID'S PROPOSED PHASE II OF THE BASIC HEALTH SERVICES PROJECT. THE MINISTER WAS VERY FRIENDLY AND CORDIAL. END SUMMARY.

2. ON JULY 19, ACCOMPANIED BY THE AID DIRECTOR, I MADE MY INITIAL CALL ON THE MINISTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH, DR. SHAH WALI. AFTER EXCHANGING PLEASANTRIES, I TOLD THE MINISTER OF THE RECENT MEETING BETWEEN UNDER SECRETARY NEWSOM AND PRESIDENT TARAKI. I NOTED OUR DESIRE TO ESTABLISH FRIENDLY RELATIONS ON THE BASIS OF MUTUAL RESPECT AND MUTUAL BENEFIT, AND THE U.S. DESIRE FOR AN INDEPENDENT AND NON-ALIGNED AFGHANISTAN AND REGIONAL STABILITY. I TOLD HIM THAT I THOUGHT WE HAD HAD A GOOD MEETING WITH PRESIDENT TARAKI, AND WE WERE NOW DESIROUS TO CONTINUE OUR RELATIONS IN A MORE CONCRETE WAY WITH AID. THE MINISTER SAID HE HAD HEARD THAT THE MEETING HAD GONE WELL.

3. I ASKED HOW HIS MINISTRY WAS PROGRESSING WITH THE

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PREPARATION OF THE NEW FIVE YEAR PLAN, AND WHAT WOULD BE ITS CENTRAL THEME. THE MINISTER SAID THEY WERE CURRENTLY WORKING ON THE PLAN BUT GAVE NO INDICATION AS TO WHEN IT WOULD BE COMPLETED. HE SAID THAT LESS THAN 25 PERCENT OF THE PEOPLE WERE PRESENTLY RECEIVING ANY MODERN HEALTH CARE AT ALL, AND THAT A CENTRAL PRIORITY OF THE NEW PLAN WOULD BE TO REACH THE 75 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION CURRENTLY OUTSIDE THE SYSTEM.

4. I ALSO ASKED WHAT THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC HEALTH (MOPH) ROLE WOULD BE WITH THE AFGHAN FAMILY GUIDANCE ASSOCIATION (AFGA), GIVEN THE DISSOLUTION OF THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS, AND WHETHER THE MOPH PLANNED TO ASSIMILATE THE AFGA CLINICS. HE RESPONDED THAT HIS MINISTRY WOULD CONTINUE TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR AFGA, AND THAT HE DID PLAN TO ABSORB THE AFGA MCH CLINICS. WHEN WE CITED THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE POPULATION PROBLEM, AND THAT BY THE MOST CONSERVATIVE WORLD BANK ESTIMATE, AFGHANISTAN'S POPULATION WOULD INCREASE FROM ITS CURRENT 15 MILLION TO 40 MILLION IN APPROXIMATELY FORTY YEARS, THE MINISTER INDICATED THAT HE WAS NOT CONCERNED; AFGHANISTAN WAS A BIG COUNTRY AND COULD ABSORB A MUCH LARGER POPULATION. HE DID, HOWEVER, CONCUR WITH THE NEED TO COMBINE FAMILY PLANNING WITH MATERNAL CHILD HEALTH CARE.

5. I EXPRESSED SATISFACTION THAT WE APPEARED TO BE MOVING AHEAD WITH PLANS FOR FUTURE AID ASSISTANCE TO THE BASIC RURAL HEALTH DELIVERY SYSTEM. THE AID DIRECTOR NOTED THE MEETINGS HE HAD HAD WITH THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF HEALTH, AND THE RECENT TWO HOUR BRIEFING THAT HAD BEEN GIVEN TO THE DEPUTY MINISTER AND SENIOR MINISTRY OF PUBLIC HEALTH STAFF. THE AID DIRECTOR SAID THAT WHILE THERE HAD NOT BEEN AN IDENTITY OF VIEWS ON ALL ISSUES, THE MEETING HAD BEEN A POSITIVE ONE AND THAT THE DEPUTY MINISTER HAD FORMED A TECHNICAL COMMITTEE UNDER THE PRESIDENT OF

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PREVENTIVE MEDICINE, DR. DARMANGAR, TO STUDY THE PROJECT PROPOSAL. THE MINISTER SAID THAT HE HAD BEEN BRIEFED ON THIS MATTER AND ALSO WAS CONFIDENT WE COULD WORK OUT A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE PROJECT TO EXPAND BASIC HEALTH CARE. HE SAID THAT A CRITICAL ASPECT OF RURAL HEALTH THAT HE WANTED INCLUDED IN OUR PROJECT WAS REFERRAL CARE. THE AID DIRECTOR STATED THAT THE PROJECT PROPOSAL CURRENTLY BEING DISCUSSED WITH MOPH STAFF INCLUDED REFERRALS TO THE PROVINCIAL HOSPITALS AS PART OF THE RURAL HEALTH CARE SYSTEM. WHILE WE WERE NOT CERTAIN AT THIS TIME JUST WHAT THE PROBLEMS AND NEEDS WERE, AID RECOGNIZED THE NEED FOR A BASIC REFERRAL CAPABILITY AT THE PROVINCIAL LEVEL, AND PROPOSED TO ADDRESS THIS ISSUE IN THE PROJECT.

6. IN TAKING OUR LEAVE, I TOLD THE MINISTER THAT I WAS ANXIOUS TO VISIT A VILLAGE HEALTH WORKER OR DAI TRAINING SESSION IN THE NEAR FUTURE. THE MINISTER SAID THAT HE WOULD WELCOME SUCH A VISIT.

7. COMMENT: DR. SHAH WALI CLEARLY WENT OUT OF HIS WAY TO BE FRIENDLY AND COURTEOUS. UNLIKE THE 20 MINUTE PREVIOUS WAIT BEFORE SEEING THE MINISTER, WE WERE USHERED IN IMMEDIATELY UPON ARRIVAL. THIS MAY HAVE BEEN DUE TO OUR EARLIER REMARKS TO PRESIDENT TARAKI NOTING THAT COOPERATION WAS MOVING SLOWLY WITH

THE HEALTH MINISTRY. THE MINISTER IS AWKWARD AND ILL AT EASE
SOCIALLY, BUT THIS TIME HE SMILED FREQUENTLY, MADE MORE EYE
CONTACT, AND WAS GENERALLY QUITE PLEASANT. END COMMENT.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: HEALTH, MEETINGS, PUBLIC HEALTH, SHAH
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978KABUL05939
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780302-0733
Format: TEL
From: KABUL
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780729/aaaaayov.tel
Line Count: 120
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: a246f96d-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1913205
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MEETING WITH MINISTER OF PUBLIC HEALTH, DR. SHAH WALI
TAGS: EAID, AF, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/a246f96d-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014